

Note: This document is an overview of some of the many activities of the United States pertinent to the World Food Summit commitments. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Because of the time and space constraints involved in its creation, this document includes only a few of the numerous activities of non-governmental organizations, private voluntary organizations, academic institutions, and local and state citizens' groups. It was compiled from publicly available sources. Please send any suggestions for additions or revision to: Office of the National Food Security Coordinator, USDA/FAS, 3016S, Washington, DC 20250, fax 202-720-6103.

INTRODUCTION

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT PLAN OF ACTION

1. The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action lay the foundations for diverse paths to a common objective - food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In this regard, concerted action at all levels is required. Each nation must adopt a strategy consistent with its resources and capacities to achieve its individual goals and, at the same time, cooperate regionally and internationally in order to organize collective solutions to global issues of food security. In a world of increasingly interlinked institutions, societies and economies, coordinated efforts and shared responsibilities are essential.
2. Poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food. The vast majority of those who are undernourished, either cannot produce or cannot afford to buy enough food. They have inadequate access to means of production such as land, water, inputs, improved seeds and plants, appropriate technologies and farm credit. In addition, wars, civil strife, natural disasters, climate related ecological changes and environmental degradation have adversely affected millions of people. Although food assistance may be provided to ease their plight, it is not a long term solution to the underlying causes of food insecurity. It is important to maintain an adequate capacity in the international community to provide food aid, whenever it is required, in response to emergencies. Equitable access to stable food supplies should be ensured.
3. A peaceful and stable environment in every country is a fundamental condition for the attainment of sustainable food security. Governments are responsible for creating an enabling environment for private and group initiatives to devote their skills, efforts and resources, and in particular investment, towards the common goal of food for all. This should be undertaken with the cooperation and participation of all members of society. Farmers, fishers and foresters and other food producers and providers, have critical roles in achieving food security, and their full involvement and enablement are crucial for success.
4. Poverty, hunger and malnutrition are some of the principal causes of accelerated migration from rural to urban areas in developing countries. The largest population shift of all times is now under way. Unless these problems are addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion, the political, economic and social stability of many countries and regions may well be seriously affected, perhaps even compromising world peace. It is necessary to target those people and areas suffering most from hunger and malnutrition and identify causes and take remedial action to improve the situation. A more complete, user-friendly source of information at all levels would enable this.
5. Availability of enough food for all can be attained. The 5.8 billion people in the world today have, on average, 15 percent more food per person than the global population of 4 billion people had 20 years ago. Yet, further large increases in world food production, through the sustainable management of natural resources, are required to feed a growing population, and achieve improved diets. Increased production, including traditional crops and their products, in efficient combination with food imports, reserves, and international trade can strengthen food security and address regional disparities. Food aid is one of the many instruments which can help to promote food security. Long term investment in research and in cataloguing and conserving genetic resources, particularly at the national level, is essential. The link between sufficient food supplies and household food security must be ensured.
6. Harmful seasonal and inter-annual instability of food supplies can be reduced. Progress should include targeting on minimizing the vulnerability to, and impact of, climate fluctuations and pests and diseases. To effect timely transfers of supplies to deficit areas and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, use should be made, in efficient combination, of climate early warning systems, transfer and utilization of appropriate agricultural, fishery and forestry technologies, production, and reliable trade, storage and financial mechanisms. Natural and man-made disasters can often be anticipated or even prevented, and response must be timely and effective and assist recovery.

7. Unless national governments and the international community address the multifaceted causes underlying food insecurity, the number of hungry and malnourished people will remain very high in developing countries, particularly in Africa south of the Sahara; and sustainable food security will not be achieved. This situation is unacceptable. This Plan of Action envisages an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015, and a mid-term review to ascertain whether it is possible to achieve this target by 2010.¹

8. The resources required for investment will be generated mostly from domestic, private and public sources. The international community has a key role to play in supporting the adoption of appropriate national policies and, where necessary and appropriate, in providing technical and financial assistance to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in fostering food security.

9. The multi-dimensional nature of the follow-up to the World Food Summit includes actions at the national, intergovernmental and inter-agency levels. The international community, and the UN system, including FAO, as well as other agencies and bodies according to their mandates, have important contributions to the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. The FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will have responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action.

10. Reaching sustainable world food security is part and parcel of achieving the social, economic, environmental and human development objectives agreed upon in recent international conferences. The World Food Summit Plan of Action builds on consensus reached in these fora and is based on the conviction that although the world is faced with major food insecurity, solutions to these problems exist. If all parties at local, national, regional and international levels make determined and sustained efforts, then the overall goal of food for all, at all times, will be achieved.

11. The Plan of Action of the World Food Summit is in conformity with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law and strives to consolidate the results of other UN conferences since 1990 on subjects having a bearing on food security.

12. The implementation of the recommendations contained in this Plan of Action is the sovereign right and responsibility of each State through national laws and the formulation of strategies, policies, programmes, and development priorities, in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, and the significance of and the full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities should contribute to the full enjoyment by all of their human rights in order to achieve the objective of food

¹ The United States accepts the goal of reducing the number of undernourished people in the United States to half their present level no later than 2015. However, in the U.S., scientific and public health communities and the government have adopted the definition framed by expert panels. For the purposes of measurement, food security has been defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life and includes at a minimum: a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and b) the assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (for example, without resorting to using emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, and other coping strategies). Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain. In this definition, hunger, the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, and malnutrition are potential, though not necessary, consequences of food insecurity.

"Nutrition security" encompasses food security and, in addition, incorporates the provision of an environment that encourages and motivates society to make food choices consistent with short-and long-term good health. The U.S. adopted the goal of continued improvement of national nutrition security to achieve a healthier and more productive society in "Nutrition Action Themes for the United States," the 1996 U.S. response to the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN).

security for all.²

² The United States understands and accepts this paragraph to require actions taken by governments to implement the Plan of Action through the national laws and policies which must be in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions do not diminish the need for full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.